

## A Message From Executive Officer Karen McGagin



Karen McGagin  
Executive Officer

This month I am pleased to introduce the newest members of the Board's executive staff and welcome back a familiar face.

In August, Luisa Park joined us as the Deputy Executive Officer for Administration. Luisa was the Executive Officer for the Office of Public School Construction. Pamela Schneider joined us as Deputy Executive Officer for Legislation. Pamela was the legislative representative for the California Public Employee Retirement System. Dennis Boydston will join the Board as Deputy Executive Officer for the Revenue Recovery and Accounting Division on November 1. Dennis has been the manager of Program Services at the Office of Public School Construction. And, I am pleased to

announce the return of Ted Boughton as Deputy Executive Officer for the Victim Compensation Program. They will join Richard Anderson, Chief Deputy Executive Officer; Shirley Ramudo, Audit Division Chief; Judith Kopec, Chief Counsel, and Public Information Officer Fran Clader as members of the Executive Team.

During the next few years of change and development, our strong partnerships with victim service providers throughout California offer a key path for us to help crime victims. In FY 2002/03, 78 percent of applications to the VCP were filed through victim witness centers throughout the state. While I have had the pleasure of meeting many of the Board's partners in recent months, I plan to get out and meet more of you in the months ahead.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger created the California Performance Review (CPR) to conduct a focused examination and assessment of California state government. The CPR Commission was subsequently formed to gather testimony on the findings of the report at hearings conducted throughout the state. I attended the hearing on public safety issues in Long Beach on September 10 to listen to testimony on the recommendations that affect crime victim services. Chief among them is consolidation of many state victim service functions, including victim assistance grant funding and the VCP, into a newly created Department of Public Safety and Homeland Security. There is still time to comment on the recommendations. For more information about the CPR or to share your thoughts and opinions, visit <http://cpr.ca.gov>.

The text of the CPR report is available at <http://www.report.cpr.ca.gov/>.

In closing, I look forward to meeting and talking with more of our partners in the near future and seeing the exciting things happening in the field of victim services. Please do not hesitate to contact me, or any member of our executive staff, if you have a question, concern, or suggestion that will help us improve services to crime victims.

Sincerely,

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## Helping Victims Cope with Loss During the Holidays

Anniversaries and holidays can be very difficult for those who have lost a loved one. With the passing of the third anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board (Board) hosted a support group meeting on September 18 in Sacramento for survivors and victim family members. The California September 11 Support Group has met for the last several years helping survivors and family members work through the pain and rebuild their lives.

Dr. Vanessa Kelly of the Trauma Recovery Center has been working with the California September 11 Support Group since it began in October 2001. The Board and the University of California, San Francisco established the Trauma Recovery Center, located at San Francisco General Hospital, to demonstrate the effectiveness of providing comprehensive and integrated services to victims of crime and to remove barriers to care.

Dr. Kelly had advice for those working with victims during anniversaries and holidays. She suggested remembering that anniversaries are always harder than anticipated as they remind people of their losses. It may be helpful to counsel victims to experience whatever feelings are there and to encourage them to participate, or not, in different events. Help victims listen to what their needs are rather than trying to take care of everyone else. For some victims, some traditions may be altered and new ones created because their lives have changed.

"Some people feel they don't have the right to celebrate while others know their loved one would have wanted them to find joy again," said Dr. Kelly. The Support Group will meet next in December. Dr. Kelly recommends the following Internet sites may be helpful for those coping with loss during an anniversary or the holidays: The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies at [www.istss.org](http://www.istss.org) and the Gift From Within at [www.giftfromwithin.org](http://www.giftfromwithin.org).



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[http://www.tcdesign.net/solidarity\\_graphics.htm](http://www.tcdesign.net/solidarity_graphics.htm)

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## New Per Diem Rate Set for Legislators

The three member Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board lowered the per diem rate paid to members of the State Legislature from \$140 to \$138, effective October 1, 2004. The Board is responsible for setting this rate, which cannot be lower than the federal rate set by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) for federal employees traveling to Sacramento. If the Board sets the rate higher than the federal rate, members of the Legislature will have to pay taxes on the difference in the rates. The GSA recently lowered their rate to \$138, presenting a tax liability problem for members of the Legislature receiving \$140. As a result, the Board acted to lower the rate to \$138 at its September meeting.

## October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 [www.ndvh.org](http://www.ndvh.org)  
California Coalition Against Domestic Violence: [www.caadv.org](http://www.caadv.org)  
Statewide California Coalition for Battered Women: [www.sccbw.org](http://www.sccbw.org)

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## Spotlight on Mendocino County's Victim Witness Assistance Center

### **Welcome to the Spotlight!**

With each issue of this newsletter, we hope to focus our "spotlight" on another key partner in providing victim compensation services. We look forward to profiling victim witness assistance centers, county claims processing and restitution units, and teams working at the Board office in Sacramento.

Mendocino County's Victim Witness Assistance Center is located in the District Attorney's Office. A large, rural county, Mendocino is home to significant Latino and Native American populations. In response to these customers, Victim Witness added the Special Emphasis Victim Witness Assistance (SEVA) program six years ago. The two SEVA advocates focus outreach to these communities, even visiting outlying areas to serve them.

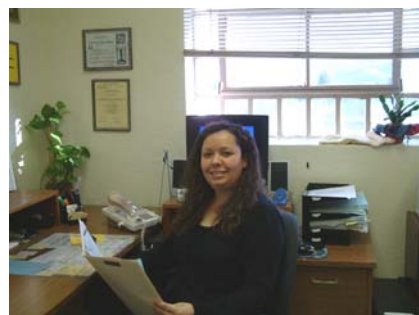
"District Attorney Norman L. Vroman has been very supportive of the Victim Witness unit," said Director Anita Toste.

"Basically, we provide crisis intervention, emergency assistance, resource and referral assistance, and help with

completing Victim Compensation Program (VCP) applications." Victim Witness will also notify the victim's family and friends of the crime, and even try to make financial arrangements with the victim's creditors.

Because navigating the criminal justice system can be difficult, "we notify victims of court dates and times, provide them with a court escort, and even arrange transportation," said Toste. "We keep the victim updated on case status and disposition." The advocates provide training to county criminal justice and victim agencies, and also assist victims in receiving restitution.

In Fiscal Year 2003/2004, crime victims in Mendocino County filed 138 applications for compensation. The Board awarded \$187,069 to Mendocino County crime victims that year.



Patricia Torres, Advocate in the Mendocino County Victim Witness Assistance Center

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## 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Victims of Crime Act

The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) of 1984 recently celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. VOCA was enacted to help change the scope and quality of crime victim services in America. The concept of a federal fund to provide financial assistance to state victim compensation programs and local victim assistance programs was a priority recommendation of the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime created by President Ronald Reagan in 1982. VOCA created the Crime Victims Fund, which is comprised of most federal criminal fines, forfeited appearance bonds, and newly created special assessments on federal convictions.

During the past 20 years, state crime victim assistance and compensation programs have received more than \$4.8 billion in federal funding. Another \$1.2 billion was spent on training, victim witness staff at the federal level, and Children's Justice Act grants. The Office for Victims of Crime in the U.S. Department of Justice administers the Crime Victims Fund, which supports state compensation resources and a variety of nonprofit and governmental victim assistance programs.

California received \$64.8 million in VOCA funds this year to assist victims of violent crime. The grant is the largest ever in the 39-year history of the California VCP. California has received \$420.6 million in federal grants for the California VCP during the past 20 years.

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## Year-end Numbers

Final numbers for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2004, show that the Board received 50,145 applications from victims seeking compensation for a crime. "Our continuing challenge and goal is reaching more crime victims and eliminating barriers that victims may face when accessing needed services and obtaining the benefits available from the Victim Compensation Program," said Steve Hall, acting Deputy Executive Officer of the VCP.

### Victim Compensation Program

Applications Received	50,145
Applications Allowed	45,347
Claims Payments	\$67,220,823
Restitution Fines Collected	\$48,727,426
Restitution Orders Collected	\$4,956,734

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## Board Staff Implements New Restitution Law

SB 631, featuring provisions to aid the collection of restitution, was signed into law on August 16. Board staff is implementing this law and notifying counties of the changes. The Board's website will soon feature a section explaining the new law. Staff will train court clerks regarding the parole violation revocation terms and is exploring the use of an electronic data exchange for handling minute orders received. The new law also designates the Secretary of the State and Consumer Services Agency as chair of the three-member Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board.

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